

MACAULAY'S USE OF AUTHORITIES

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All these were surpassed in importance by the confidential correspondence of William III with Bentinck, which was in the possession of the Duke of Portland. Macaulay used transcripts of these letters made for Sir James Mackintosh, not the originals, as he owns at the beginning of chapter vii.¹ The papers of Robert Harley, also in the Duke of Portland's possession, Macaulay does not appear to have used, with the exception of one or two copied for Mackintosh.² These papers have since been published by the Historical Manuscripts Commission.³ That commission, appointed to give an account of the collections of papers, in private hands, which relate to public affairs, was not established till 1869. In those reports there is a mass of material, relating to the period, which was not accessible in 1848 or 1856. To compare Macaulay's narrative with the evidence contained in the reports of the Commission and the Calendars issued by the Record Office is one of the tasks which modern historians should undertake. In some cases the result of this examination and comparison would alter his narrative ; in some, supplement it; in most, confirm it.

Mr. Gladstone in his essay on Macaulay gave vent to a wish many have shared : ° We sometimes fancy that ere long there will be editions of his work in which

his readers
may be saved from pitfalls by brief, respectful,
judicious
commentary, and that his great achievements
may be at
once commemorated and corrected by men of
slower pace,
of drier light, and more tranquil, broad-set
and com-

¹II, 811 (vii). These letters were published as
Correspondentie van
Willem III en van Hans Willem Bentinck, ed. N. Japikse (2
vols.; 1927-8).

²V, 2406 (xx).

³The Manuscripts of the Duke of Portland (9 vols.;
1891-1923). The
papers of Robert Harley are mainly in vols. iii-v. Other
papers are in the
Manuscripts of the Marquis of Bath, vols. i and ii (1904-7).